



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.3447 | FAX (517) 373.5849
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/birkholz/

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Contact: Amanda Price
517-373-3447

“Protecting our Waters” plan introduced in Senate

LANSING – Michigan’s groundwater will be protected under legislation introduced in the Senate today. The legislation will see committee action in the next two weeks, announced Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township.

“We are introducing a sound water use protection plan to carefully conserve and manage one of Michigan’s most important natural resources and economic assets,” said Birkholz, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee. “This legislation was crafted with support from a wide range of water users in the state, including the Michigan United Conservation Club, Michigan Manufacturers Association, and Farm Bureau. We anticipate sending this to the governor before the end of the year.”

The legislative package includes bills that will:

- Implement an immediate regulation of all new water withdrawals in excess of 2 million gallons a day.
- Prohibit diversions of our water through pipeline, barge, rail or other methods of bulk water shipment. This legislation will be introduced in the House in the next week.
- Focus on new and expanding high capacity water uses on surface water, natural resources and nearby existing wells.
- Create a more consistent and accurate water use reporting system.
- Continue the authorization of the Groundwater Conservation Advisory Council to provide ongoing recommendations for improvements to this program.

“This is comprehensive legislation to study, report and implement a plan that will take carefully constructed measures to protect our natural resources and preserve reasonable use of our waters,” said Birkholz. “The citizens of this state should be acknowledged for their participation in our hearings and I also want to specifically acknowledge Steven Chester, director of the Department of Environmental Quality, for his work on this legislation. We all have a stake in putting in place a plan that will benefit our state for generations to come.”

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